

REMARKS

Applicants acknowledge receipt of an Office Action dated January 19, 2007. In this response, Applicants have amended claim 1 to incorporate the features of claim 6 and have amended the pending claims to place them in a format which is more conventional for U.S. patent practice, including, *inter alia*, removing reference numerals, replacing the phrase “characterized in that” with “wherein,” and inserting the conventional U.S. transitional term “comprising”. In view of the amendment to claim 1, claim 6 has been cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer, and the claims which previously depended from claim 6 have been amended to depend from claim 1.

Following entry of these amendments, claims 1-5 and 7-23 are pending in the application.

Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the present application in view of the foregoing amendments, and in view of the reasons that follow.

Allowable Subject Matter

As an initial matter, Applicants wish to thank the PTO for the indication, on page 2 of the Office Action, that claims 2-20 and 23 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. As discussed above, Applicants have amended claim 1 to incorporate the features of claim 6. In view of this amendment, Applicants believe that claims 1-5 and 7-23 are now in *prima facie* allowable form.

Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. §102

On page 2 of the Office Action, the PTO has rejected claims 1, 2, 21 & 22 under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as allegedly being anticipated by U.S. Patent Pub. No. 2002/0083735 to Neumann *et al.* (hereafter “Neumann”). While Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection, in the interest of permitting allowable subject matter to issue without further delay, Applicants have amended claim 1 to incorporate the features of claim 6, which, as discussed above, the PTO has indicated as containing allowable subject matter. In view of this amendment, Applicants submit that the outstanding rejection under §102 is now moot.

CONCLUSION

Applicants believe that the present application is now in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration of the application as amended is respectfully requested.

The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned by telephone if it is felt that a telephone interview would advance the prosecution of the present application.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees which may be required regarding this application under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16-1.17, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 19-0741. Should no proper payment be enclosed herewith, as by a check or credit card payment form being in the wrong amount, unsigned, post-dated, otherwise improper or informal or even entirely missing, the Commissioner is authorized to charge the unpaid amount to Deposit Account No. 19-0741. If any extensions of time are needed for timely acceptance of papers submitted herewith, Applicant hereby petitions for such extension under 37 C.F.R. §1.136 and authorizes payment of any such extensions fees to Deposit Account No. 19-0741.

Respectfully submitted,

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By  _____

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